

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 /066 W

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P 061210Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6462

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 03208

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS AT PAU,

JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 2

REF: PARIS 2805

SUMMARY. THE PS CONGRESS AT PAU WITNESSED TWO PARALLEL DEBATES: FIRST, OVER THE UNITY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, AND SECOND, OVER THE UNITY OF THE LEFT. PS FIRST SECRETARY MITTERRAND STRENGTHENED HIS HOLD OVER HIS PARTY, WHILE ENHANCING HIS PERSONAL LEADERSHIP. ALTHOUGH RECEIVING A QUARTER OF THE MANDATES, THE PS LEFT WING (CERES) WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP ITS SEATS ON THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. THE NEW SECRETARIAT -- WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS -- IS COMPOSED OF PARTY FIGURES CLOSE TO MITTERRAND. THE CONGRESS DID NOTHING FOR LEFT UNITY; THE PCF DAILY L'HUMANITE IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED THE RESULTS AS A SWING TO THE RIGHT, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN THE PS POSITION. AS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PS/PCF QUARREL CONTINUES -- BUT WITHOUT GETTING TOO

NEAR THE RUPTURE POINT -- AND WITH ELECTIONS FAR IN THE FUTURE, MITTERRAND HAS DECIDED TO TAKE FIRMER CONTROL OF THE PS' NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING, AT THE RISK OF HAVING A DECLARED INTERNAL OPPOSITION. A DETERMINED, DISSENTING LEFT WING WITHIN THE PS COULD MAKE MITTERRAND'S TASK OF RESPONDING TO THE PCF MORE DIFFICULT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CONTINUING COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST QUARREL COULD ACCELERATE THE PROCESS BY WHICH THE PS HAS BECOME THE PRIME LEFT FORCE AND IS AIMING TO BECOME THE LEADING PARTY OF FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. "THE COMMON PROGRAM IS ALSO OURS." IN HIS SPEECH TO 2,300 ENTHUSIASTIC DELEGATES AT PAU, MITTERRAND SKILLFULLY AVOIDED A POLEMIC WITH THE PCF WHILE GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF A PS LEADERSHIP DETERMINED TO ASSERT AN INDEPENDENT LINE, AND WHILE REMAINING COMMITTED TO THE LEFT'S COMMON PROGRAM. HIS TONE AND STYLE, BY TURNS MOCKING AND SARCASTIC, SERVED NOTICE TO THE COMMUNISTS THAT THE PS WOULD REFUSE TO REPLACE THE COMMON PROGRAM WITH A "COUNTERFEIT MONOLITH", AND REMINDED HIS UNITED LEFT PARTNERS THAT THE BASIS OF SOCIALISM IS TOLERANCE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS CO-AUTHOR OF THE COMMON PROGRAM HAS NO LESSONS TO RECEIVE, AND SCORNED THE IDEA OF THE SOCIALISTS JOINING A CENTER-LEFT ALLIANCE WITH THE GISCARDIANS TO FACE THE ECONOMIC CRISIS.

2. CERES: THE PS LEFT-WING MINORITY. A TOUGH AND AMBITIOUS MITTERRAND REFUSED ALL ATTEMPTS BY THE PARTY'S LEFT WING (THE CERES, LED BY BELFORT DEPUTY JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT) TO COMPROMISE ON THE PS' FUTURE COURSE. THE EFFECT WAS TO PUSH CERES OUT OF THE PARTY'S NATIONAL SECRETARIAT, WHICH MEETS WEEKLY UNDER MITTERRAND AND TAKES MOST OF THE POLICY DECISIONS. THIS SHOULD MAKE MITTERRAND'S CONTROL OF NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING EASIER. CERES, HOWEVER, WILL CONTINUE TO BE REPRESENTED PROPORTIONALLY (AROUND 35 PERCENT) ON THE PARTY'S LESSER ORGANS: THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BUREAU. WITH CERES NO LONGER PARTICIPATING IN THE PARTY'S DAY-TO-DAY POLICY DIRECTION, PS SENIOR

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LEADERSHIP WILL BE OPEN TO THE CHARGE OF BEING LESS REVOLUTIONARY, LESS ACTIVELY "LEFT". AND HAVING IN EFFECT A LEFT FACTION BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE PCF COULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR MITTERRAND TO ANSWER THE COMMUNISTS.

3. MITTERRAND'S POSITION. MITTERRAND CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED AT PAU THAT HE CAN MAKE THE PARTY RESPOND TO HIS

DIRECTION. BUT WITH AN UNRULY CERES SNIPING AT HIM FROM THE WINGS AND WITH THE PCF ATTACKING FRONTALLY, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF HE CAN CONTINUE TO BE TOTALLY CREDIBLE AS A SPOKESMAN FOR A UNITED, INDEPENDENT PS. AT THE VERY LEAST HE WILL HAVE TO TAKE MORE PUBLIC ACCOUNT OF HIS CRITICS WITHIN THE PARTY THAN HE HAS

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SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 /066 W

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P 061210Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6463

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 03208

DONE UP TO NOW. BY DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM CERES, MITTERRAND HAS TAKEN A GAMBLE THAT COULD PAY OFF IN ENHANCING PS CHANCES OF CONTINUING ITS RECENT RAPID GROWTH WHILE THE PCF STAGNATES. MUCH OF THE PS' SUCCESS IN RECENT MONTHS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO MITTERRAND'S ABILITY TO PRESENT A STATESMANLIKE IMAGE OF A UNITED PARTY SUFFICIENTLY TO THE LEFT TO ATTRACT A SOCIALIST CONSTITUENCY, YET MODERATE ENOUGH TO APPEAR AS A CREDIBLE DETERRENT TO TOO MUCH PCF INFLUENCE. WITHOUT MITTERRAND FIRMLY AT THE HELM, THE PS WOULD LOSE MUCH OF ITS APPEAL AND ELAN -- AND POSSIBLY ITS STRENGTH AND COHESIVENESS AS WELL.

4. COMMENT: ON FEBRUARY 5 THE PS ANNOUNCED A NATIONAL PROPAGANDA AND ACTION CAMPAIGN ON EMPLOYMENT. SINCE THIS WAS A PRINCIPAL CERES PROPOSAL AT THE PAU CONGRESS, MITTERRAND'S DECISION TO OPEN THIS CAMPAIGN TAKES A BOW IN CERES' DIRECTION, WHILE PUTTING THE PCF ON NOTICE THAT THE PS/PCF QUARREL WILL NOT PREVENT THE PS FROM SEEKING ITS OWN SOLUTIONS TO THE CURRENT

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ECONOMIC CRISIS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY UNITY, PARTY MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS03208
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750043-0954
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750266/aaaachpr.tel
Line Count: 185
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PARIS 2805
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <14 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS AT PAU, JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 2
TAGS: PINT, FR, SOCIALIST PARTY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006